1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-6 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

is uneasily superimposed on the traditional pattern. The part played by the Church during the 1956 Referendum on integration with the United Kingdom was most complicated. During the disturbances following the breakdown of Government in the spring of 1958, town and country, proletariat and bourgeoisie, Maltese Malta and Latinised Malta, all reacted differently. Over all responsible actions looms the knowledge that Malta is not a viable independency (4).

As we have seen, education and language have been inextricably involved in politics (5). More directly important is the educational effect on the people as a whole of the system of public instruction. Under the leadership of Dr. Albert Laferla public education became vastly improved in all ways (6), and from his tutelage, more particularly after the Compulsory Attendance Act of 1924, came the generation of Maltese which now forms economically and socially the most important part of the population. After 1933, Italian ceased to be used as a medium of instruction, a standard Maltese orthography came into use (7), and the school system was expanded to meet the most obvious and immediate needs. Education was sadly disrupted by World War II but since that time has continued to improve in quality and range of facilities (8). Compulsory Education as distinct from compulsory attendance came into force in 1946, and in 1955 full-time education became the rule. Some 22 per cent. of children of school age still receive education in private, usually Church run, schools.

It is vital to realise the extent of the social and economic revolution implied in these developments. In the rural areas the change has been one from illiteracy to education within one generation. Even in the towns, and this is particularly true for the new growths associated with dockyard, manufacturing and service industry employment, thoughts and activities are being fundamentally affected by education for the first time in Maltese history. Contrasts between the levels of awareness of the value of formal education are considerable, and the full impact of technical education has yet to be felt - the first Government Technical School was opened in 1934. The chief contrast observable in the field however is between the two age groups, over and under 30 to 35 years of age. The former still contains many illiterate and therefore conservative people; the latter by reason of training as well as age is radical and impatient. The latter attitude is largely responsible for the drift from the land which encourages the domination of agriculture by residual conservatism.

In the field of public health, skeletal public works services had been constructed before World War I. Recent developments may be regarded as logical extensions both in the sector of public works and in the field of medicine. As late as 1936 the judgment of the Chief Government Medical Officer was 'no scheme of sanitary reform ever met with greater opposition than the establishment of the modern sewer system in Malta' (9), but by 1955, about 270,000 or over 90 per cent. of the Maltese population lived in sewered dwellings, Żurrieq alone among the large villages remaining unserved. In parts of the countryside and in the smaller villages, dispersion of settlement renders prohibitive the cost of connection of each dwelling with the public sewers. The more isolated and the more rural areas are now the regions of lowest standards (Fig. 33).

Medical services, particularly in their relevance to the problem of high infant mortality, developed late and slowly (10). The most serious obstacles were those rooted in Maltese social life (11). The strength of the matriarchal tradition in Maltese household has meant that the ignorance of the oldest generation persists in imposing itself on the life of the youngest. Dirt, overclothing and under-feeding, the indiscriminate and early use of farinaceous foods, all these were difficult to eradicate in overcrowded and grandmother-dominated conditions (12). The difficulty of educating in hygiene and personal health an indifferent and tradition-bound population proved insuperable and in 1939 the infantile mortality rate was as high as the average for the preceding 30 years.

The final breakthrough occurred paradoxically during World War II. In 1943 and 1944 housing conditions and diet were worse than any experienced in peacetime but the death rate and the infantile mortality rate began to fall to record

[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 179]

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

low levels. Earlier improvements probably supplied the basis for change but more important was the fact that, for the first time, the effective Garrison of Malta included the whole population. The new machinery for public information, the desperate need for reducing disease incidence and preventing epidemics, and even food rationing and shortage had cumulatively beneficial effects on the public mind. More than all, it would seem, the military control of the besieged islands with its conscription of many Maltese males and the increased contact of British troops with the people, together with that strange uniting exaltation in face of danger observed in other countries, all shocked Malta into new ways of thought (Fig. 66).

After the war this momentum was maintained during the period of reconstruction. The Malta Memorial District Nursing Association, Child Health Clinics, and U.N.-established ante-natal clinics have now been accepted and their services utilised. In 1939 the infantile mortality rate was 34.7 per 1,000, leaving the memory of the rate of 350 per 1,000 in 1942 far behind.

This revolutionary change is of particular revelance to this study. Many of its implications need no labouring. The demographic consequences, for instance, are obvious enough, as also the slowness with which traditional ways of life in Malta have changed. For us the most important consequence is that rising generations through a new awareness of causation and consequence, of scientific processes, are becoming vulnerable to new ideas in associated fields. There are no great steps between preventive human medicine, inoculation, livestock injections and an appreciation of plant pathology. One difficulty remains; the rural areas are the least affected by these recent changes and those individuals in the countryside who are mentally injected with new ideas and understanding are, for various reasons, the least likely to remain in agriculture.

Exemplifying this continuing regional dichotomy, but unity in complexity, is the recent history of milk consumption and production (13). Traditionally in Malta, 'the entire milk supply has been delivered by the goat herself' (14). Sometimes living with their flocks in the *fossa* which surround Valletta, the herdsmen would wander the streets, milking the animals on demand. Bruce and Zammit in 1885 and 1905 showed that the bacillus of Undulant or Malta Fever was freely excreted in goats milk and that the high incidence in Malta of this debilitating, sometimes lethal, disease was a natural consequence of the general albeit low per capita consumption of fresh milk from predominantly diseased goats. After considerable investigation, a milk pasteurising plant was erected and the first pasteurised milk was distributed, Valletta, Floriana and Sliema being declared 'closed areas' within which the sale of raw milk became illegal. During World War II, further extension of this policy was prevented but, since most goats were slaughtered for meat because of fodder shortage and because consumption of tinned milk became normal, the incidence of Malta fever fell to record low levels. Post-war revival in goats' milk production resulted in general re-infection by brucellosis and in 1946 the incidence of undulant fever was the highest ever recorded. During the post-war period public health and welfare policies have encouraged the consumption of milk. Because of the incidence of Malta fever, this has entailed the provision of expensive pasteurising plant, the prevention of the sale of unpasteurised, and the official encouragement of production of cows' rather than goats' milk.

This particular development is examined at greater length in Chapter X but some main points of general import merit consideration here. First, Maltese society has recently been affected by social, dietetic and medical policies which profoundly affect the basis of social life. In general one might say that the Maltese way of life is being made more remote from the simple crudities of parochial experience. Secondly, in the field of health and social welfare, the criterion of scientifically measured need has been adopted as the basis of official policy and the question of availability of resources is regarded as of secondary importance. Thirdly, this increasing social sophistication has only very recently become operative in Maltese life and different scales of value exist in different generations and in different social groups. Lastly, it would be fair to say that, while the urban markets are still only relatively fastidious

1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

tion can read, travel and make contact directly and vicariously with the world outside. Emigration too has tested the strength of the Faith. In consequence, we can now find in Malta a historical cross-section represented in spatial distribution. At one extreme one can meet in Sliema agnostic Maltese who never go near a church; at the other, in rural Gozo, one can find general obedience to the Bishop's instructions. All societies are heterogeneous in this respect but in Malta the strain of division within society is particularly great because of the existence of so many other cleavages. The reaction of the Church to this new situation has been dual in character. In the first place the Church itself has taken official action. Reform and correction, the imposition of rigorous film and book censorship, the series of edicts on dress and on behaviour have accompanied research, such as that of Abbé Houtart (22), into the needs of the people. Secondly, there have appeared the lay organisations with the avowed intent of redressing the balance. M.U.S.E.U.M. and Catholic Action before World War II, Cana, Legion of Mary, Social Action, the Holy Name Society and many others of foreign and indigenous origin since 1945 have developed in the conurbation where the challenge to the Church was strongest (23).

Financially the Church is still strong, owning as it does some 19 per cent. of the agricultural land of the Islands and an unverifiable total of urban property (24). Politically, the strength of the Church rests on its hold over the minds and hearts of the people. It is not necessary for the Church to take much overt action to demonstrate its power.

As a last vignette of the changing Maltese socio-economic complex we may consider some aspects of recent research on a useful indicator of social change, the bread baking industry (25).

The purchasing, distribution and processing of wheat and wheat flour, remains as it has been for centuries, Government controlled. When the Knights established their capital at Valletta and when the suburb-outwork of Floriana was built, great stone-chamber granaries were hewn out of the solid rock, developed versions of the much older 'bell-pits'. These underground granaries were stocked by the official organisation, the *Università*, and the grain periodically distributed at controlled prices. This siege-system, necessitated by dependence on imports, was abolished in the early nineteenth century, and the newly established Board of Trade contented itself with licensing importations. As a measure of agricultural protection and for the raising of revenue, duties were levied on these shipments. During the twentieth century, and culminating in the emergency measures of the beleaguered Islands during World War II, controls became tighter and grain prices heavily subsidised.

During the period of urbanisation and more especially during the last siege the general practice of home baking rapidly declined in Malta, although in Gozo it still persists. In the latter island there was in 1957 only one full-time and one part-time commercial bakery, while in Malta there were 201. All food grains produced for sale in the Island should legally be sent to licensed flour mills for blending. Imports, almost entirely of hard Canadian grain, are made by the Department of Trade and by the Victualling Yard in H.M. Dockyard. Ninety-seven per cent. of all flour issued for ration-bread making is subsidised, but local estimates suggest that up to 50 per cent. is used for making other products, this illegally used flour being sold at a discount.

Fig. 67 shows the distribution of bakeries in Malta, their importance and the main distribution areas as they existed in 1957. Only two villages in 1950 and one in 1957 - Safi - did not possess their own bakeries. This however is not indicative of closed fields of distribution but only of the multiplicity and the small-scale of the enterprises. Of the 35 districts, 32 imported bread from and 17 exported bread to other areas. Over half the 15,000 bags of subsidised flour issued in 1950 eventually found their way as bread outside the receiving districts. Of this inter-regional trade, Qormi supplied almost 80 per cent. Very briefly the points of interest are as follows. Qormi, which in 1957 had 48 bakeries, has always been the traditional baking centre, partly because of its central situation, but mainly as noted in Chapter VIII because of its situation in

[See p. 198 -- Analyst]

[Village of Mgarr]

By the mid-Thirties Mgarr had become independent of Mosta as a Police area and had been connected to the Telephone network[15]. Other amenities to reach the village about this time included a number of levelled roads, although asphalting did not appear until after the 1939-45 War. During the War years most construction activity was halted. Some 700 refugees from the blitzed harbour areas were billeted in the village; thirty shelters were dug, and about 600 bombs fell in the vicinity of the village destroying two houses and killing three people (R/291). United States' forces camped near Mgarr prior to the Sicily invasion: an Italian aircraft crashed not far away. Mgarr heard about the war and experienced as much of it at first hand as most other rural parts of the Islands lying well away from the Dockyard, air bases and other strategic targets. Food rationing and Government control of production put the farmers of Mgarr in as strong a position as elsewhere but at the worst period of the siege even they were reduced to chewing carob beans[12].

By the advent of the present decade Mgarr had acquired the normal characteristics of community life of village Malta, with Church, school, police station, dispensary and doctor, telephones, and roads. The built-up area has since expanded rapidly. In this present decade, too, the village has gone on to 'catch-up' with older settlements to the extent of establishing the four branches of the Catholic Action movement (Appendix 4). A most modern and well-appointed 'oratory' has for five years been the focal point of Catholic teaching and social work in the Parish. Its theatre holds 700 and shows films on Sundays and special occasions. More recently a commercial cinema has opened in the village but, one understands, it cannot detract from the popularity of the oratory film show.

Within the past few years, shops have appeared in the village which is now independent in this respect for food and general items. Travelling vans, a prominent feature of the countryside, further swell the range of goods available on the spot and are joined in this door to door service by the weekly paraffin (petrolju) vehicle. For other items Mgarr housewives still make the journey to Mosta or Valletta on the buses which operate every few hours; a generation ago their mothers carried bread on their backs each week from Mosta, the parent village.

On account of its recent development, Mgarr lacks certain features found in the larger and much older settlements. The Catholic Action is the only Lay Movement in the village - though it is notably active there, and of the Confraternities which are numerous in the older settlements Mgarr has only three (Appendix 4).

178 436 437 465 to a limited extent in the life and work of the average farmer, and barter as a medium of exchange had a far greater importance than in recent decades. Family labour within the home went unpaid, but even where wages were paid they were very small indeed, both relatively and absolutely when compared with modern amounts (Section 2). Examples, for comparative purposes, are given by the 1836 Royal Commissioners (B/184), Midge (B/516) and Price (B/556), but even as late as 1911 a day's wages in farm-work might 178 454 have been something of the order of 1s 3d (B/186). From this same report however, it is learnt that the farming community had by that date become investment conscious and had passed through a sequence of stages:

(a) hoarding "their small capitals" (B/186-12473),
(b) investing in jewellery,
(c) saving with the aim of buying a house,
(d) depositing in savings banks towards this aim,
(e) "Now they want bigger interest than the banks will give them and they are investing in foreign bonds" (B/186-12475).

178 465 [461] The changed place of money in Maltese rural society today is exemplified by the field labourer of fifty years ago who received 1s 3d for a dawn-to-dusk working day where his grandson now expects 25/- or 30/- for a limited eight hour day, if he can be persuaded to indulge in field work at all. The developments observed by the 1911 Commissioners were by no means general among the rural population at that time. They were in fact merely the first limited signs of what was to come. However, between 178 433 722 1911 and 1939 the Maltese farmer moved steadily towards the commercialism of today. The Second World War brought siege conditions of shortage which put the food producer 465 in Malta in a more commanding position than ever before. He could expect very high guaranteed prices for his produce - or even higher ones on the black market. Farmers became used to the idea of big financial returns for their labour. [454] Some were able to effect substantial savings under distorted war-time market conditions, but more widespread still was the feeling, which carried on after 1945, that farming in Malta ought still to produce, in competitive peace-time, the profits of war time shortage.

178 511 The major underlying socio-economic trend has been the great expansion in the range of demands of the countryman. The traditional peasant subsistence farmer was content to live off his own farm as suggested above but the change to 'commercialism' in his farming along with his social emancipation has widened the sphere of considered needs. Diet has become more varied and now includes a variety of food items not produced locally: clothing

178 (the guaranteed price system for milk sold to the M.M.U.)
654 has had a similar effect. It has encouraged the farmer to
[234] turn to milk production and to increase his herd to the maximum (Section 2).

178 Briefly therefore, the position is that the farmer in
511 Malta and Gozo is now faced with a variety of factors
434 tending to make him money conscious to a degree unknown to his grandfather - who spent the 6d per year already mentioned. These factors basically underly the complex of socio-economic changes which have brought and are bringing improved living standards, "emancipation" and a greater range of demands:

(a) In diet, clothing, recreation and 'luxury' fields the farmer is demanding more than before, and this means money.

(b) The traditional pre-occupation with saving has been diverted towards the saving and investment of money rather than the accumulation of kind. Dowry is one example.

(c) The raised circumstances of the farmer have made him anxious to own his farm, and especially his house and (with the recent emphasis here) his animals.

(d) Anxious to get the most out of his holding within the present commercial system he is keen to develop his farm by acquiring machinery (with possible help from a Government loan) or by making some capital improvement. Suffering from shortage of labour, he wants to be able to pay hired farm labour the high wages demanded. His own children work away from the home farm.
[464]

[722] (e) The artificially distorted market conditions in siege and war-torn Malta between 1939 and 1945 put the farmer in a commanding financial position, which he continues to regard nostalgically as a Golden Age of Maltese farming. He has never fully been reconciled to his now changed position.

DEBT

178
434 Thus, where the peasant farmer of a century ago saw in
[471] his farm the means of providing for the various needs of the family, the modern farmer in Malta regards his holding, his animals, and equipment, as the means whereby he can make the money which he needs to buy more new items, to expand
[184] his property and to build up his capital reserves. This is the picture as it would be ideally and as it is for a very small section of the farming community: one of the major problems of Maltese farming today is that it is by no means the position among the great bulk of the rural and farming
178 population of the Islands. If, having observed the present
426 position of money and the demands upon which it is based,
434 one turns to a more detailed examination of the financial status of the Maltese farmer the true nature of the problem emerges. Far from acquiring the money which he expects,

175 During the war years the farmer had been able to
722 strengthen his financial position to an unprecendented
511 extent. The high prices which he could command left him
454 with a large reserve upon which to draw during the decade
after 1945. Today these reserves are dwindling and
disappearing. In part they have been put towards capital
improvements on the farm - notably the acquisition of cows
and machinery (Section 2), and in part they have been spent
[369] on routine home and family maintainance. The farmer in
post-War Malta and Gozo has been struggling to live up to
'Urban' standards, to many of which he was introduced as a
[426] result of the War. He has, in many cases, been living
above his means to the extent of being perpetually in debt.
He has somehow failed to adapt himself to his new position
and still looks back nostaligically, at least from the
financial point of view, to his commanding position during
the siege.

434 Today the farmer's standard of living compares
511 unfavourably with that of the Urban working classes but
171 is notably higher than that of other farming communities
[369] in nearby Mediterranean countries. In rural Greece, for
example, annual earnings frequently do not exceed £25,
although the average per capita income for the whole
country is over £60[29]. Yet prices for simple clothing
and other essential items are often quite exorbitant,
especially for the impoverished Greek farmer. A 1954
survey of seventy Libyan farms in the Zawia area of
northern Tripolitania found an average 'farm earnings' of
£136 per annum[30], but the present rate for casual farm
labour in the area is some 5/- per day only (about £75
per annum) and even less in more rural districts[31].

Thus in Libya a field-labourer may expect to earn
little more than half the income of a land-holding farmer.
[434] In Malta, however, the situation appears reversed, and the
labourer without field commitments of his own can demand
his 25/- for an eight-hour day and emerge, in many cases,
markedly better off than the farmer who hired him and who
stands the loss on unsold, unprofitable or damaged crops.

511 Within his own country the Maltese farmer has, on
434 average, a standard of life still slightly below the
general level, although the disparity is by no means as
great as it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries. Above-average exceptions include those
farmers who have been able to profit from the present
regime of guaranteed milk sales by building up a large
herd, or those who can still draw upon war-time savings
or other accumulated reserves.

735 The C.A.R.E.[27] assessment of poverty made for the
434 purpose of free food distributions to poor and needy

747

*159 46 241 231 In the first two cases the seasonal distribution of activity reflects the major points of contrast between the 'dry' and 'irrigated' operator. The herdsman stands in contrast to both of these with the care of his animals occupying a large part of every day of the year - even including Sundays and festa days when the field-working farmer expects to be off duty.

*159 809 241 [212] [191] [871] Ġamri and farming Ġamri is a highly intelligent man in his forties who by his own efforts has progressed well beyond the limits of his very elementary formal education. He reads the Maltese-language daily 'Il-Berqa' (B/55) and keeps abreast of the school work of his children whom he encourages to learn English thoroughly as "the land cannot be divided among them all". English language is synonomous with education in his thinking, and education, in turn, he sees as the means of escape from the lowly position of the farmer in Maltese society. "We are but an Arab breed", he observes somewhat ashamedly. He himself has "little faith in the Government - which should help us". Much of this attitude had its roots [722] in the War years of 1939-45 when the siege and food shortages produced something of a Golden Age for the food-producer. The farmer has not forgotten the £10 offered by the Government for 1 cwt of potatoes. Since the return to peace-time conditions [454] the economic position of the farmer has certainly deteriorated rapidly with the depletion in his reserves, built up during hostilities, and the rise in labour costs and in the [722] [435] cost of living. During the War "the farmer was not so hungry as the townsman who had to rely on the black market"; now his position is one of a constant battle with rising costs. [434] Ġamri, as an arable farmer, lacks the steady and guaranteed income of the milk-producing herdsman. His recent [178] moves towards pig-meat production represent an attempt to get [231] into an apparently more profitable line.

*159 809 794 18 178 His nephew and many other farmers, though not Ġamri himself, make the mistake of failing to distinguish between the Church and the Government in their attitude to "the authorities". Thus the nephew regards the Catholic Action movement (of which he is an active member) as somehow "helping to run the country". But even Ġamri himself thinks that the Social Action Movement (another part of the Church's Lay Apostolate) must have some part in the secular administration of the country for he believes that an application for relief for storm damage made, through the Parish Priest, to that Movement amounts to an approach to the 'Gvern' (Government) of which he is so full of criticism. The case illustrates a point made elsewhere that the Maltese farmer is still primarily village-conscious. Clearly this is not to deny, however, that his horizon today is much wider than was the case when his father regarded